The requirements detailed here are for the single degree MA program in philosophy. Students wishing to pursue a dual-degree or interfield program with another degree program at CGU should consult the philosophy department chair for details.

MA in Philosophy Degree Requirements

Department Advisor
Upon entering the MA program in philosophy, you will be assigned a department advisor. The department advisor will oversee your progress toward the MA degree. If a student’s department advisor is on leave, the department chair will serve as their interim advisor until the regular advisor returns.

The Curriculum
The Master of Arts degree in philosophy requires:
  • 32 units of course work plus 4 units of capstone preparation (PHIL399) for a total of 36 units.
    ▪ Includes 4 unit pro-seminar required of all students in their first year.
    ▪ The courses must be in accordance with the academic plan agreed upon between you and your advisor.
    ▪ At least 24 units must be approved philosophy courses.
  • Capstone paper.
  • Proficiency in logic as research tool.

A usual full-time course is 4 units. These requirements usually can be completed comfortably in two years of full-time study. Please see sections below for details on each aspect of these requirements.

Academic Plan, Coursework, Registration
During the first week, or earlier, of your first semester in the philosophy MA program, you will meet with your advisor and work out a plan of courses to take towards the completion of coursework requirements. This plan is your academic plan. In general, the academic plan will specify which topic areas must be covered by your coursework. Once the plan is agreed upon, it is binding and any changes will require the approval of the department (not just your advisor).

Review of your academic progress and satisfaction of requirements by your advisor is required during the two-week mandatory advising period prior to registration each semester. A registration hold will be placed on all accounts and will remain until you have met with and received approval from your advisor/chair. You will be notified by email in advance of the mandatory advising period each semester.
You may take any course offered at CGU within the constraints imposed by your individual academic plan. Since the material treated in a course may differ considerably from year to year, courses may be repeated for credit with faculty approval.

You may also take up to 12 units (3 courses) of upper level seminar-type courses offered at the Claremont Colleges. Courses open to philosophy MA students will be listed on the graduate course offerings, and you must request permission from the Chair of the Department and the instructor before enrolling. Please consult the Registrar’s webpage for instructions on how to enroll in or audit classes at the undergraduate Claremont Colleges. Current course listings of all undergraduate courses can be found on the Claremont McKenna College webpage.

In addition to courses offered by professors, you may organize up to 4 units of independent studies to pursue specialized topics under the guidance of a professor. When an independent study replaces a course, you must do an equivalent amount of reading and writing. You must complete the Enrollment Contract and Registration Form for Independent Coursework Credit and attach a plan for the independent study signed by both the instructor and your advisor. The plan should include a course syllabus, a reading list, a description of scheduled meetings (at least one hour per week for a 4-unit course), and a description of writing assignments. Detailed instructions and the registration form for independent study classes can be found on MyCGU.

**Research Tool(s)**
Logic is the mandatory research tool for students in the MA in Philosophy program. You can satisfy this requirement by either passing an exam or by passing an appropriate course in logic course with a grade of B+ or higher. You are strongly encouraged, though not required, to consider adding a foreign language as a research tool.

The School of Arts and Humanities policy on foreign languages as Research Tools is: Fulfillment of a language tool by demonstrating competency at translating an approved language into English--as distinct from completing another type of research tool (permitted by some SAH departments)--can only be achieved by passing an approved, written examination administered by the School of Arts & Humanities. This applies to all SAH students, including native speakers of the language under consideration. Details about the language exam are outlined below.

**The Language Exam**
The foreign language exam is offered four times per year by the SAH. For more information, current exam dates, and to register, current registered students should visit the School of Arts & Humanities MyCGU webpage (note, this page requires a login).

**Capstone Research Paper**
A final capstone paper of 12-15 pages (no more than 4,000 words) is required for the MA in philosophy. The paper should show an ability to integrate knowledge of the philosophical literature and original thought in a chosen area of interest. It is expected that the paper will be an expanded version of a research paper from coursework, or a project agreed upon in consultation with your advisor. Please see the Notes on Capstone Paper below for more details on the expectations for the capstone paper.
**Procedure**

1. Engage a faculty member who agrees to serve as reader of the capstone research paper.
2. Complete Capstone Proposal Form and submit it to the department chair.
3. With your reader and the department, work towards completion of the proposed paper. The work may include, among other things, several presentations of your ideas and drafts to your peers. Submit the final draft along with the evaluation form to the reader.
4. When the paper and evaluation form have been returned to you, submit them to the department chair.

**Format**

The paper will be in a specified journal article format of your choosing and approved by your advisor. Download all of the submission requirements (word count, style guidelines, areas covered by the journal, etc.) and format your paper specifically to meet these requirements, except the word count which should not exceed 4000. You should also turn in a copy of these requirements with your final paper.

Consult your research advisor early in the process. The research advisor may be drawn, with advisor approval, from philosophy faculty at CGU, other departments at CGU, the Claremont Colleges, or CST. Your research advisor may differ from your department advisor. You do not need additional readers to approve the topic or oversee the writing of your paper. The paper will be evaluated by your research advisor and a second reader designated by the department chair.

**Deadlines**

Paper proposals are due March 1 of the semester before you intend to complete the capstone paper. Final capstone papers are due the following October 1.

**Transferring Credits**

The University guidelines for transferring graduate credits from institutions other than CGU, may be found on the [Office of Student Records/Registrar](#) webpage.

Philosophy students have the following requirements for transferring units in addition to the University’s guidelines:

Philosophy students must complete a minimum of 24 units within the Philosophy department before transferring outside credits. Petitions may be submitted as early as the end of a student’s first full year at CGU (when the student is on the verge of successfully completing 24 units).

In addition to completing the [Transfer Credit Request Form](#), Philosophy students must include (1) a letter explaining why the courses listed for transfer are appropriate for Philosophy credit; (2) the student’s best seminar paper from CGU; (3) a brief paragraph addressing each course’s relevance, merits, research, and written work; (4) course syllabi and materials if possible. The petition should also explain the scholarly direction of the student’s graduate career and how past graduate work fits into future academic plans. This petition may be developed in consultation with the department advisor.
Notes on Capstone Paper

What is a capstone paper?

The kind of work we expect in a capstone paper is radically different from course work. A graduate student’s career consists largely in reading, thinking, and writing about problems and issues within the scope and concerns of particular courses and seminars. This kind of work is both necessary and important. But it is not that much different from what you would do as an undergraduate. Even an advanced seminar paper, for example, is defined by the agenda of the course for which it is written, and it is typically written towards the end of the semester, leaving you little time—often, only a few days—to work on it.

We think our students need and deserve more. That is why our expectations for a capstone paper are radically different from course work. Like any philosophy paper, a successful capstone paper needs to lay out clearly your views and arguments on some worthwhile issue or question. But, in addition, it must clearly demonstrate your understanding of the larger context of debate within which your work is situated: e.g., what others have said on the issue, how the debate has developed over time, how your position differs from those of other people, how it is similar, etc. It must also show some independence of thought, and it must be written for a general, though still philosophically informed audience.

A capstone paper should be your best effort at producing a serious and polished piece of philosophical work. It will approach its topic in greater depth and achieve greater clarity than a typical seminar paper, and ideally it will make more of a contribution to the questions and issues it treats. Thus it will demonstrate to the faculty, to the admissions committee of a strong PhD program elsewhere, perhaps, and to yourself that you can and in fact have produced graduate-level work.

How should one go about working on the paper?

Plainly, producing such a paper will require a lot of research, reflection, and writing. You will need to do a significant amount of background reading and thinking about your topic to attain some measure of control over the relevant literature, and to produce work of your own informed by that understanding. Such command of the literature should also enable you to develop and to lay out your views and arguments more clearly and with greater depth than you could in a seminar paper.

The first thing you need to do is to find an appropriate topic. Any area that interests you in philosophy or its history is fair game, subject to the approval of the faculty. A successful seminar paper is often a good place to start, since its success means that you have already done some of the work necessary for the capstone paper. You’ll also need to establish a plan for including time for working on your paper within your existing schedule of responsibilities. Set aside a few hours each week to work on your capstone paper, and take care to stick to your schedule. If you don’t,
you will find, before you know it, that you have spent weeks and months doing next to nothing. We, the faculty, were graduate students ourselves once, and we speak from personal experience on this point. Spend those hours that you have set aside for the capstone paper doing research, thinking, and writing. You will have to work independently, so it is important that you exercise appropriate self-discipline.

Working independently does not mean that you should not seek out advice and help from others. On the contrary, seeking appropriate help and advice is an integral part of working independently. So, while we will be offering little by way of unsolicited help and advice, you are strongly encouraged to seek help and advice from us and from others. Your faculty advisor, other faculty members, your fellow students, the Writing Center, the Library, writing groups—whatever works for you—are all important resources and are there to help you. But **you have to take initiative to make effective use of them**: that’s part of working independently.

**How do I find the time to write my capstone paper?**

That’s up to you. We have drawn up a required timeline that should help you in organizing your time and energies: Students are to submit a proposal by March 1 in the year before they expect to graduate and to submit the final version by the following October 1. This timeline reflects the level of investment of time that we expect from you. The timeline gives you seven months between the submission of your proposal for the paper and the submission of your final paper. Since you will need further time to formulate your proposal, it is clear that you will be devoting at least eight months to producing your capstone paper. You need to make effective use of this time. **You cannot produce a satisfactory capstone paper by working on it just the week before the submission deadline.**